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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [IR](#) [KU](#) [KUWAIT](#) [IRAN](#) [RELATIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: GCC STRATEGY ON IRAN: "HOPING FOR A MIRACLE"

REF: A. KUWAIT 306  
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 86

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and comment: Former Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Ambassador Abdullah Bishara told Poloff in a February 1 meeting that while the GCC "has no other option than to comply with any UNSC resolution," it would not publicly support such a step. GCC countries had expressed their concerns about the potential economic, environmental, and security ramifications of Iran's nuclear program directly to the Iranian government (GOI), but Iran would "not listen to reason," Bishara claimed. Although Bishara said he believed Iran would "inevitably" develop nuclear weapons, an objective Iranian officials had insinuated during a meeting Bishara participated in, he said the GCC "hoped for a miracle." GCC countries had no plans for dealing with the repercussions of any international military action against Iran, and "had not even talked about" the policy implications of a nuclear-armed Iran. "The GCC will adopt whatever the international community adopts," Bishara said.

[1](#)2. (C) Questioning the overall efficacy of sanctions, Bishara argued that Iran had "a big arsenal of mischief" to "cause problems" in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and the Gulf. Although intimately involved in GCC politics and still an influential voice, Bishara does not formally speak for either the Kuwaiti government (GOK) or the GCC. In a separate meeting, Chairman of Parliament's Environmental Affairs Committee Ali Al-Dokbasi told Poloff he was unaware of any studies conducted on the potential environmental impact of an accident at Iran's Bushehr nuclear facility, which GOK officials have repeatedly cited as their greatest concern with Iran's nuclear program. End summary and comment.

GCC Concerned, But Iran Undeterred  
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[1](#)3. (C) In a February 1 meeting with Poloff, Ambassador Abdullah Bishara, formerly Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN (1971-1981) and GCC Secretary General (1981-1992), and currently one of Kuwait's five members on the GCC Advisory Committee, said the GCC was concerned about the economic, environmental, and security implications of Iran's nuclear program. In particular, Bishara said Gulf countries feared decreased foreign investment and the possibility of an accident at the Bushehr nuclear facility. If Iran succeeded in developing nuclear weapons, which Bishara said was "inevitable," it "would upset the entire balance of power in the region."

[1](#)4. (C) Bishara said GCC countries had expressed their concerns to Iran bilaterally and collectively, citing the

negative economic and environmental effects, and arguing that a nuclear program would further isolate Iran and would "push the region to conflict and division." Iranian officials, whom Bishara characterized repeatedly as "paranoid, fearful, suffering from psychological disorientation, and believing in nightmares and ghosts behind their borders," were dismissive of these arguments. Bishara said his nephew, Majid Al-Thufiri, Kuwait's Ambassador to Iran, "always tells Iranian officials they have no reason to fear, because Iran is big and not easily threatened," but the Iranians "will not listen to reason."

15. (C) Bishara said he was part of a Kuwaiti delegation that met with "five Iranian officials one year ago when the nuclear rumors were just beginning." In the meetings, the Iranians said they were "threatened by the U.S., Israel, Russia, and India," and insisted on their "right" to have a "deterrent" capability for "protection and as a guarantor of peace and security." The Iranians had not/not mentioned "nuclear weapons" specifically, but this was directly implied from their arguments, he said. Bishara argued that "Iran would never believe security guarantees," and was very pessimistic about the possibility of the international community to deter Iran from pursuing a nuclear program. He believed Iran had carefully calculated the "pros and cons" of a nuclear program and devised a clear strategy on how to obtain it. In his opinion, there was "no doubt" Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons.

16. (C) The Iranian regime actually "enjoyed confrontation" with the international community, particularly the "Great Satan" (the United States) and the "Little Satan" (Israel), Bishara explained. The Iranian government had made the nuclear issue into a "national frenzy"; international

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condemnation would likely cause Iranians to rally around the regime, Bishara claimed.

The GCC's Ostrich-Like Approach to Iran  
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17. (C) GCC countries had "no other option, but to comply with UNSC resolutions" on Iran, Bishara said. He added, however, that the GCC, represented by Qatar on the UNSC, would not publicly support a UNSC resolution to impose sanctions on Iran, but would not oppose it either. Explaining why, he said the GCC would never confront Iran directly, but would follow the international community, giving the GCC the welcome cover of international legitimacy for any actions against Iran. "For Kuwaitis, international resolutions provide an anchor of legitimacy," Bishara explained.

18. (C) Overall, though, Bishara was pessimistic about the efficacy of sanctions. First, he argued the first UNSC resolution would be weak, giving Iran three months to "show progress." He predicted China would insist there had been progress and would block further resolutions. Second, he argued that if Saddam Hussein could survive sanctions, Iran was even better prepared to do so, and noted Iran's numerous ports on the Persian Gulf. Third, he said sanctions would only hurt the Iranian people, ultimately causing them to rally around the regime.

19. (C) While all GCC countries opposed Iran's nuclear program in principle, Bishara said Saudi Arabia and Oman were less concerned than the rest of the GCC. According to Bishara, Saudi King Abdullah commented at the GCC Conference in Abu Dhabi that he found Iranian President Ahmadinejad "moderate" in a recent meeting.

110. (C) Dr. Yacoub Al-Hayati, a former MP and another of Kuwait's members on the GCC Advisory Council, expressed a similar view, explaining to Poloffs during a dinner January 31 that the GCC was "playing politics" in avoiding public

condemnation of Iran's nuclear program.

#### And If Diplomacy Fails?

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¶11. (C) According to Bishara, "the GCC hasn't even talked about" next steps. "We are hoping diplomacy will succeed, but we don't believe anything the Iranians say. The GCC will adopt what the international community adopts," Bishara said. He further noted that the GCC had not developed contingency plans to deal with the repercussions of any international military strike against Iran and had "not even thought about" how to deal with a nuclear-armed Iran. Although stressing the importance of diplomacy, Bishara was very pessimistic about its efficacy. He suggested China and India might slow Iran's nuclear program by putting more pressure on the GOI, but would ultimately be unable to stop it. "No one can abort the Iranian scheme. Some may be able to delay it, but Iran will eventually get what it wants and will have a nuclear program," he concluded.

#### Iran's "Big Arsenal of Mischief"

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¶12. (C) Bishara claimed Iran had a "big arsenal of mischief," which included "Hezbollah, Hamas, and the spirit of martyrdom," and could "create problems throughout the region." Specifically, Iran could "cause problems" in "Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the Gulf, and with Hamas." He dismissed the possibility that Iranian agents could cause "domestic unrest" in Kuwait, arguing that Kuwaiti society had historically always been unified. Bahrain, he said, was more "fragile." He did "not rule out," however, the possibility of Iranian-backed terrorist attacks in Kuwait.

#### Parliament's Role?

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¶13. (C) Chairman of the National Assembly's Environmental Affairs Committee Ali Al-Dokbasi, an "independent," Government-leaning member of Parliament (MP), told Poloff he was not aware of any specific studies on the potential environmental impact on Kuwait of an accident at Iran's Bushehr nuclear facility, which GOK officials have repeatedly told Emboffs is their primary concern with Iran's nuclear program. Dr. Sami Al-Faraj, the Director of the Kuwait Center for Strategic Studies, a private research institute that writes "sensitive" reports for the Government, alluded to such studies during a recent meeting with Poloff (ref B). (Comment: If such studies exist, it is not surprising that

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they would not have been shared with members of Parliament.  
End comment.)

¶14. (C) Al-Dokbasi, who is also the Rapporteur of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said Parliament supported the GOK's approach to Iran "100%," though he did not seem to know exactly what the GOK's policy was. Emphasizing his comments reflected his personal view, he said Kuwait opposed "all nuclear activity in the region," including "Israel's nuclear program," which he said should be addressed at the same time as Iran's. He said Kuwait's concerns with Iran were expressed "openly" and were shared by all GCC countries. Al-Dokbasi stressed the need for "international solidarity" when dealing with Iran. (Comment: Al-Dokbasi seemed unaware of the specifics of the GOK's policy towards Iran, a likely indication of how little Parliament is involved in the shaping of this policy. End comment.)

#### Bio Note

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¶15. (SBU) Ambassador Abdullah Bishara has had an illustrious career in public service, serving both as Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN (1971-1981) and as GCC Secretary

General (1981-1994). Currently, he is an advisor in the Gulf Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; one of Kuwait's five GCC Advisory Committee members; President of the Diplomatic Studies Center; and Chairman of the Board for the United Real Estate Company, a large real estate holding company. Bishara has written several books, including ones on his experience at the UN and as GCC Secretary General.

¶16. (C) Bishara was born on November 6, 1936. He received a B.A. from Cairo University (1955-1959). He also studied diplomacy and international law at Balliol College at Oxford University, and received a M.A. in political science from St. John's University in New York. Bishara is the nephew of former National Assembly Speaker and current MP Ahmed Al-Saadoun. Kuwait's current Ambassador to Iran, Majid Al-Thufiri, is Bishara's nephew. While intimately involved in GCC politics, Bishara does not formerly speak for the Kuwaiti government or the GCC.

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